Analyze the Features of a Persuasive Essay

1. Focus

Explain Genre Features

Say: You can usually identify a book’s genre from the features in the text. For example, a book that describes events in a real person’s life and that person’s impact on the world is a biography. If you notice characters whose words and actions fit the setting of a past time, the book is probably historical fiction. Persuasive essays have features that make them distinct from other genres, too. Today we are going to identify and analyze the features of a persuasive essay.

Build a Class Genre Features Anchor Chart

Say: Think about what you already know about persuasive essays. We’ll build an anchor chart to summarize the features of persuasive essays.

Display a blank chart like the one shown here on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Also distribute copies of the chart to students on BLM 1. In the left column of the chart, record features of persuasive essays as students discuss them. If necessary, use the following questions to help students identify the features:

• What kind of position does an author of a persuasive essay take on the topic?
• How do you know whom a persuasive essay is for?
• What kind of information does an author use to make his or her case?
• How does an author try to influence the reader?
• What points of view does an author of a persuasive essay include?
• Besides outlining the problem, what else does the author provide?

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Analyze persuasive essay genre features on a class anchor chart.
• Listen to a persuasive essay mentor text and find the features of the genre in the text.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Mentor text: “Summer Vacation Is a Learning Experience, Too!” from Should School Be Year-Round?
• Chart paper and markers
• Persuasive Essay Features (BLM 1)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasive Essay Features</th>
<th>Examples from the Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has a strong position</td>
<td>page 18: “provides unique opportunities.” page 25: “have the time to make independent choices and develop personal interests”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifies specific audience</td>
<td>The audience is adults. page 18: “Think back in time. Where were you in . . . July and August when you were twelve, thirteen, or fourteen?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses facts and evidence to make a case</td>
<td>page 21: Students who studied music scored higher on the math portion of the SAT, and students who studied drama outscored their peers on the verbal portion of the SAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses powerful words and phrases to influence the reader</td>
<td>page 18: “unique opportunities”; “invaluable lessons and experiences” page 23: “Well-informed, well-experienced students make better decisions”; “valuable, critical-thinking skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes a counterargument</td>
<td>page 26: “Some adults strongly maintain that a longer school year is crucial for our children to become successful adults.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Read Aloud a Persuasive Essay**

Before you read, point out the right-hand column on your chart and on students’ BLMs. Explain that you are going to read aloud a persuasive essay and that students should listen to identify examples of the genre features. Explain that after the reading, students will work in small groups to complete the chart by recording examples of each genre feature. Read aloud the mentor text. Note: You may wish to project the text using the interactive whiteboard resources.

**2. Rehearse**

**Analyze the Mentor Text**

Form small groups of students to complete column 2 of the graphic organizer on BLM 1. If you are using the interactive whiteboard resources, invite students to revisit parts of the text at the whiteboard as they look for the examples.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

**Share Ideas**

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share the examples they found. Record their findings on the anchor chart. Post the anchor chart for students to refer to throughout the unit.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

<table>
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<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
<td>Pair beginning ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity. Keep in mind that they will not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with ELs individually to reinforce concepts while other students write independently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Intermediate**         | Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity. Write the following simple sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to contribute ideas in the group. For example:  
  *An author of a persuasive essay _____.*  
  *Persuasive essays include _____.* |
| **Advanced**             | Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the small-group activity. |

Suggests solutions or actions

page 27: Students should use summer vacation “to develop personal interests, friendships, self-esteem, independence, open-mindedness, and a strong work ethic.”

Sample Persuasive Essay Features Anchor Chart (BLM 1)

**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

**Say:** As you write your own essays, keep in mind the genre features. These characteristics include supporting evidence and powerful words and phrases that will convince the reader, acknowledgment of the counterargument, and your proposed approach to the issue. Refer to our anchor chart as you write to make sure you include all of the features of a persuasive essay.

Encourage students to think about the features of a persuasive essay as they brainstorm topics for their own essays. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

**4. Share**

Bring students together. Invite two or three students to share one or more ideas they have brainstormed.